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EAST TIMOR

East Timor was a small, underdeveloped Portuguese colony for more than four centuries, located on a remote side of the Indonesian archipelago. Following the 1974 coup in Portugal, the new Portuguese government announced its intention to give up the colony. In August 1975, a power struggle among Timorese political factions brought about the collapse of Portugal's authority on Timor and an abrupt Portuguese withdrawal from the island. A Marxist faction, Fretilin, was the best armed and early gained military control. The Indonesian government regarded Fretilin as an emerging threat in territory directly contiguous to its own on the island of Timor. Responding to appeals from Fretilin's Timorese opponents, Indonesian military forces intervened in East Timor in December 1975, overcame Fretilin's regular forces, and in 1976 formally annexed East Timor, declared Indonesia's 27th province in mid-1976.

Since that time, Fretilin elements have waged a small-scale, hit-and-run insurgency, whose area and intensity of operations have gradually diminished because of military operations. A food, shelter and health emergency arose in the province in the late 1970s, which caused great hardship and loss of life. The emegency also prompted considerable foreign concern and direct assistance from international welfare organizations such as the Swiss-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). U.S. assistance was channeled through both ICRC and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

Since then, the Indonesian military has continued operations aimed at eliminating the Fretilin threat. As of mid-1988, the military had an estimated 18,000 troops in the province to combat the insurgency. Fretilin is believed to have perhaps 200-500 armed personnel with a somewhat greater number of followers, including family members. Frequent, small-scale skirmishing between the rebels and the military is concentrated in the rugged moutainous eastern portion of the province, with occasional losses of life on both sides. Fretilin continues to ambush Indonesian forces as well as attack ordinary Timorese settlements for food and money.

Over the past several years the government has sought to win over the rebels through more peaceful means, as well. The authorities have encouraged Timorese with contacts within Fretilin to advertise the benefits that Indonesian development has brought the province, particularly in social services such as schools and health services. In addition, the government continues its amnesty program under which Fretilin rebels who

surrender are permitted to settle in their home areas under the guardianship of the local chuch and governmental authorities. From time to time, rebels do surrender, although the hard core which make up most of the remaining rebels are not expected to respond to the amnesty.

Mario Carrascalao, a native East Timorese, has served as Governor of the province since 1982. He began a second five-year term in 1987. He exercises considerable authority over the civilian government structure and has encouraged rapid establishment of a provincial government organization parallel to that of other Indonesian provinces. The Governor has also sought to give greater authority and responsibility to district-level officials and to reform areas of past abuse within the provincial government. He has been particularly active in reducing corruption, and several high-level officials have been indicted as a result of his efforts. The Governor has also been a leading advocate of "opening" the province to job-creating investment from outside and to unrestricted travel.

In early 1989, the Government "normalized" the status of East Timor, and announced it was setting aside special travel and administrative procedures not used in other provinces. This is expected to reduce the role of the military in administering the province. Experience so far indicates that travel by both foreigners and Indonesians, including the press, is easier and generally does not require a travel permit. authorities, however, are dealing with visitors on an ad hoc basis: some have travelled without permits or hindrance even to areas considered militarily sensitive, while others have had to obtain a permit.

U.S. POLICY AND PROGRAMS

The U.S. accepts Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor without maintaining that a valid act of self-determination has taken place. The United States has placed high priority on trying to improve the welfare of the Timorese people. In pursuit of that goal, the United States continues to make East Timor an element in our overall diplomatic dialogue with the Government of Indonesia, and the subject is raised in high-level meetings between Indonesian and U.S. representatives.

The U.S. has long encouraged the Government of Indonesia to increase access to East Timor by journalists, representatives of international humanitarian organizations and other responsible observers. We welcome the "opening" of the province on January 1, 1989, which we expect will permit greater access by such individuals.

Since September 1981, USAID has provided almost $6 million for an agricultural development project in the Loes River Basin in

the western part of the province. An East Timorese foundation took over administration of the project from Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in December 1987. The project is intended to encourage settled farming, multicropping and increased production of food crops, including surplus quantities for commercial marketing. In the long term, the project is expected to help reduce East Timor's endemic food shortages.

Under an agreement signed in 1980, USAID worked with the Indonesian government on a $3.6 million malaria control project covering East and West Timor. Also, the U.S. made significant contributions to support the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in East Timor during the emergency relief effort and in subsequent nutrition and welfare programs in the province.

AREAS OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

Development: The Indonesian government has assigned high priority to the development of East Timor where it spends more per capita on development than in any other province in Indonesia. The government has made major improvements in schools, housing, roads, and medical facilities, including contruction of five new hospitals and 29 public health centers. Literacy rates and educational opportunities for the Timorese people have increased at a rapid rate in recent years. Governor Carrascalao points with pride to a present primary school enrollment of over 126,000 pupils in East Timor, as compared to some 13,500 in 1975. An agricultural development high school, a secondary engineering school and a university have opened within the last two years. In addition, about 1000 Timorese, including medical students, are studying at universities elsewhere in Indonesia, most of them on government scholarships.

Food situation: The eastern region of the Indonesian archipelago, including the entire island of Timor -- which includes both East and West Timor -- has always been an impoverished area due to unpredictable rainfall, poor soils, and primitive cultivation practices. East Timor is a traditional food deficit area relying primarily on shifting "slash and burn" farming techniques. The dislocation and damaged caused by the insurgency undermined agricultural production, as have recurring weather problems. Restrictions on movement in areas of military operations have reduced or delayed planting with a further negative impact on food production.

Based on constant monitoring of the food situation since 1982, including direct observation by U.S. and other foreign officials and, since 1985, surveys taken by the ICRC, we believe East Timor has avoided serious food shortages and that no famine threatens at this time. Nonetheless, the food situation in parts of East Timor traditionally is precarious and requires careful monitoring. A road completed in 1986 between Los Palos and Iliomar has helped to ensure adequate food supplies reach

the Iliomar area which suffered serious food shortages in the past. The government's 1985 agreement to permit ICRC to resume nutrition surveys in the province on a regular basis, plus the increased government attention to food needs, have been major factors in reducing food supply problems.

Family reunions and repatriation: Beginning in 1975 several thousand Timorese left East Timor as a result of unrest there and settled in Australia, Portugal and elsewhere. Since then, the ICRC has assisted in identifying those who remained in East Timor with a claim to Portuguese citizenship or family ties abroad. In 1987, through ICRC efforts, some 162 individuals (former Portuguese civil servants and their families) were repatriated to Portugal. The ICRC is still trying to facilitate the emigration of a number of individuals who want to leave. A small number of East Timorese who fled or settled abroad have been permitted to visit family still in East Timor. In late 1986, four Timorese university students in Jakarta sought Dutch Embassy help in obtaining Portuguese passports to depart for Portugal. Although the Portuguese government agreed to issue passports, the Indonesian government stated the students did not have a valid claim to Portuguese citizenship and must apply for Indonesian travel documents. They have not done so.

Atauro Island Detention Center: International concerns over the years have included the status of suspected Fretilin sympathizers detained on Atauro Island, just north of Dili, the provincial capital. In 1982, the Indonesian government relocated some four thousand Timorese to Atauro in an effort to preclude their providing support to Fretilin elements. Only about 200 of these remain on Atauro, the others having returned to their original villages or settled elsewhere in East Timor. The ICRC notes that those remaining on Atauro decided to do so, having established family ties and some degree of self-sufficiency on the island. They are largely free to move about Atauro, have farming plots and lead a life not much different than fellow Timorese on the main island. An ICRC nurse visits Atauro regularly from Dili to help meet their medical needs.

Some of the former Atauro detainees were settled in areas far from their original homes. Other Timorese suspected of being sympathetic to Fretilin were also moved from their home villages to other parts of the province in the early 1980s. Since late 1986, the Government has permitted several hundred of these villagers to return to their original homes. It is not known how many Timorese today remain in "temporary" settlements away from their home villages, although we estimate it to be not more than one or two thousand.

International Access: The "normalizing" of the status of East Timor effective in early 1989 is expected to ease substantially previous difficulties of access to and within East Timor. Recent travel by journalists, foreign parliamentarians, and overseas relatives of East Timorese suggest that access has been greatly increased. In the past, representatives of several international organizations such as the ICRC and UNICEF with on-going programs in East Timor have enjoyed regular access. An ICRC nurse is assigned full-time in Dili. ICRC representatives from Jakarta make frequent trips to conduct prison visits, nutrition studies, tracings and repatriations.

Diplomats from embassies in Jakarta frequently visit East Timor and go to all parts of the province, subject to security conditions, in the company of local officials. The U.S. Ambassador toured the province in June 1988 in order to observe conditions directly. Other officials of the Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta visit East Timor approximately every six months. They have travelled widely in the province.

Beginning in late 1985, the Indonesian government permitted Timorese living abroad to visit relatives in East Timor and permitted Timorese in Indonesia to travel abroad as well.

Human Rights: Since 1975 international human rights concerns have centered on allegations of abuses including indiscriminate killings by Indonesian troops and on the detention without trial, mistreatment in custody, and disappearance of suspected Fretilin members and their sympathizers. Allegations of such acts have declined significantly in recent years. The U.S. Government has expressed its concern about these allegations to the Indonesian government.

The decline in allegations of recent human rights abuses reflects the government's efforts in recent years to win over unsympathetic Timorese through a demonstration of the benefits of development under Indonesian rule rather than through harsh treatment or intimidation. Over the past few years military officials in East Timor have shown a far greater sensitivity to human rights concerns and possible international repercussions of inappropriate actions. Nevertheless, when security is perceived to be threatened, the military uses its broad powers of detention. Authorities detained several hundred persons for unspecified security reasons before and after the November 1, 1988 visit of President Soeharto to East Timor. In a pastoral letter the following month, Roman Catholic Bishop Belo, himself East Timorese, criticized the military for severely mistreating some of these detainees. According to official sources, all of the detainees have since been released, except for eight who were tried and sentenced to prison terms of up to six months. Disturbing reports and allegations of human rights abuses periodically emerge from East Timor, but the overall trend points to improvement as conditions in the province generally ease.

It is impossible to calculate the precise number of Timorese who may have died since 1975 as a result of fighting. There is no credible evidence to support the allegations there were hundreds of thousands of deaths. In 1983 a well-informed Indonesian government official told diplomats the number of dead on both sides since 1975 may have reached 60,000 to 75,000, the great bulk of the victims having died in the first years of fighting from inadequate medical care and food rather than directly from battle. While we cannot confirm that estimate, nothing we have learned since would cause us to question its validity.

Since late 1983 the Indonesian government has been trying suspected Fretilin fighters in civilian courts for criminal acts including murder and arson. In July 1985 the Indonesian Permanent Representative to the United Nations transmitted to the UN Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization, a list of 157 East Timorese tried in Indonesian courts for activities against the Indonesian Republic. The Indonesian Permanent Representative also issued a list of 50 persons released from jail in East Timor for lack of evidence. Further trials have continued since then and from time to time the government has made available lists of those tried, their sentences and names of additional people released for lack of evidence. About 50 persons convicted of Fretilin activities are still serving sentences in Dili and Jakarta.

EAST TIMOR AT THE UN

Since 1976, the East Timor question has been raised in various international bodies. Since 1982, the United Nations General Assembly has not considered the issue in view of the on-going discussions under UN auspices between Indonesia and Portugal. Similarly, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has voted not to undertake further consideration of the East Timor issue since early 1985. Nonetheless, Portugal, several Lusophone African states and Greece, on behalf of the European Community, referred to East Timor in their respective addresses at the opening of the 1988 United Nations General Assembly.

Indonesia held nation-wide general elections in April 1987 and considers that the election proceedings in East Timor, which included voting for a local provincial assembly, are a demonstration of East Timor's integration into Indonesia and therefore a valid act of self-determination. Portugal rejects this position and protested President Soeharto's November 1 visit to the province to attend a scouting congress and inaugurate development projects.

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US State Department